

GUEST EDITORIAL

IUCN—The World Conservation Union

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) is the world's largest and most experienced conservation alliance. Founded in 1948*, IUCN is devoted to the protection and sustainable use of Earth's living natural resources.

The Union brings together the concerns, interests, and dedicated skills, of appropriate scientists, resource managers, lawyers, and other professionals, from all parts of the world, to focus upon the challenge of maintaining and using properly the planet's renewable natural resources. It provides a mechanism for dialogue among intergovernmental, governmental, and nongovernmental, groups, while also bridging the perspectives of North, South, East, and West. Its policies, proposals, and positions, are innovative in identifying problems and causes of, and solutions for, conservation; moreover these solutions, being based upon scientific perspectives, are independent of influence from special political or other interests.

IUCN is governed democratically by its General Assembly, which consists of its voting governmental and nongovernmental members that currently total 557 from 116 countries. The Assembly selects IUCN's President and Council, and approves both its programme and budget. The Council in turn selects Vice-Presidents from among its ranks, and elects the Director-General. Statutes, established and approved by the Assembly, provide the governing instrument for the organization.

The *mission* of IUCN is 'to promote the optimal relationship between the human population and the natural world, by effectively coordinating the conservation activities of its international network, and by attracting financial and other support for this mission.'

How IUCN Works

The headquarters Secretariat is maintained in Gland, near Geneva, Switzerland, and collaborates with a series of networks consisting of professional scientists, resource managers, administrators, lawyers, academics, and committed citizen conservationists. These networks are organized in the form of 6 standing commissions, respectively on ecology; education; environmental planning; law, policy, and administration; national parks and protected areas; and species survival. Additional networks include that of the new and rapidly-growing community of Botanic Gardens. These dedicated bodies provide the best technical advice available, and do so on a voluntary basis.

The commissions *analyse major problems in conservation and development*. In addition, *ad hoc* task-forces and advisory groups deal with particular issues, such as Antarctica, the Sahel, population, and conservation of plants.

The secretariat and the networks *set out courses of action and provide policy advice* on such themes as the conservation of tropical forests, wetlands, plants, marine and coastal areas, and Sahel rehabilitation. Work is directed towards developing standards, definitions, directories, concepts, and manuals—all designed to assist the member organizations and allied professions in carrying out their work.

The IUCN Environmental Law Centre (ELC), situated in Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany, and the IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre (CMC), in Kew and Cambridge, England, *monitor* the status and trends in wild plant and animal life, and in related law, policy, and trade. This requires the systematic gathering of information and its careful evaluation by qualified specialists.

ELC and CMC are integrated with the headquarters team to *inform* and *report* on the status and trends in natural resources—including law, policy, and trade. In the light also of contributions from the expert networks, solutions to key problems are suggested and promoted. Examples include policy guidance to governments and NGOs on the decisions to be addressed by the CITES† Conference of the parties concerned, reports to the Council of Europe on the implementation of the Berne Convention††, and reports to the United Nations and interested bodies world-wide on the state of the global protected areas system**. As an example of the new trend in facilities and services, the US National Park Service in Washington DC now has an on-line computer link with CMC which provides protected-area information to IUCN's constituency in that part of the world.

Finally, IUCN *acts* as and where appropriate. This covers a wide gamut of activities including, for example, carefully prepared representation at key international events such as the UNEP Governing Council meetings

* As the International Union for the Protection of Nature (IUPN)—see the late Professor Jean G. Baer's 'Aperçu historique de la Protection de la Nature', published in the initial issue of our former Journal, *Biological Conservation* (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 7–11, 1968).—Ed.

† Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, of which the Secretariat is located at 6 Rue du Maupas, 1009 Lausanne, Switzerland.—Ed.

†† Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, 'The Berne Convention'.—Ed.

** See, for example, the *United Nations List of National Parks and Protected Areas*, compiled and published periodically by IUCN.—Ed.

and those of the Convention on Conservation of Antarctic Living Marine Resources, drafting and promoting national and international legislation, scientifically-based positions on whaling or various development issues, training or demonstration projects, and exploration and testing of pioneering and innovative developments where possible *in situ*.

Particularly noteworthy is the work of the Conservation for Development Centre (CDC) at Gland, which collaborates with development aid agencies and banks to design and implement field projects that inculcate conservation into the development process. Among other activities, CDC works with local governments to prepare national conservation strategies which ensure that development is conservation-oriented. This in-the-field enterprise is expected to surpass 14 million Swiss francs in value of work in cooperation with developing countries in 1987.

Partnerships

IUCN's regular constituency of governmental and nongovernmental organizations is complemented by a set of special relations with important global, regional, and local, institutions. For example, IUCN prepared the *World Conservation Strategy* with the advice, cooperation, and financial assistance, of UNEP and WWF, and with the endorsement of FAO and UNESCO, while WWF and IUCN work closely together in the development and implementation of the conservation campaigns to conserve tropical forests, wetlands, and threatened plants. Also, IUCN collaborates with UNEP in implementing components of the Regional Seas Programme[§] of that organization.

IUCN provides the Secretariat for the International Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), with strong technical support from the International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB). CITES receives scientific and technical information and advice from IUCN on trade, resource management assessment, and law and policy issues pertaining to endangered species. Similar cooperation is being developed with the Migratory Species Convention secretariat. UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee depend upon IUCN for analysis, field inspection, and presentation of nominations for natural sites to be included on the World Heritage list and receive financial and technical assistance.

IUCN's work programme also includes collaboration in the Biosphere Reserve Action Plan of UNESCO. The Bali Action Plan for the world's protected areas was developed at the close of the Third World National Parks Congress and was based upon the cooperation and sponsorship of a wide variety of IUCN's traditional partners.

In addition to the above global activities, IUCN is widely involved in many collaborative projects at the national level. For example, the governments of Oman and Saudi Arabia contract IUCN to assist them in planning for conservation and development of their coastal and marine areas.

Besides other UN and bilateral aid agencies, partners include the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) on marine activities; the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) on bird species; the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and UNFPA^{§§} on population; the World Resources Institute (WRI), World Bank, and FAO, on tropical forest action; and the Tropical Agricultural Research and Training Center (CATIE), Costa Rica, on wildland management. The Governments of Kenya, Senegal, and Zimbabwe, provide full diplomatic status to IUCN's regional offices in Africa, whence the Union's project work and contacts with local organizations are kept efficient and 'close to the ground'.

Switzerland, the host country to the IUCN Secretariat, expanded its commitment to the Union in a variety of ways during 1986—including the establishment of a special fiscal status for the Secretariat which provides considerable savings on our operations at Headquarters.

In addition to support provided by WWF, bilateral agencies, and other mentioned organizations, several of IUCN's most recent initiatives have received grants from the Mellon, Noyes, and Jones, Foundations, and from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

The First 40 Years

In 1988, IUCN will mark its 40th anniversary year, but already, among the Union's many accomplishments, several stand out. The *World Conservation Strategy* constitutes the framework for conservation and development world-wide. The *World Charter for Nature* was adopted unanimously by the United Nations and sets the stage for the role of nations on behalf of their citizens, born and yet unborn, with respect to the sustainable use of living natural resources.

CITES, the World Heritage Convention, the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme of UNESCO, and the International Convention on Wetlands, were all launched successfully with major collaboration from IUCN. The first three congresses on national parks have stimulated interest in, and helped with the realization of, the now practically global network of protected areas. Our 'Red Data Books' serve as the standard

[§] Now renamed the 'Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme' and having its Activity Centre in Nairobi, Kenya.—Ed.

^{§§} UNFPA = United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

works on endangered species. Manuals for training managers of protected areas are used in courses throughout the tropics. National Conservation Strategies have shown governments a practical way to build conservation into the development process.

Peoples from all corners of the globe have joined in common interest to develop and secure an environment which is ecologically well managed. With those people on all continents, IUCN has cooperated to create new institutions, train managers, conserve species, set aside national parks, prepare plans and strategies, analyse ecological problems, and define and implement solutions.

Looking to the Future

The next 40 years will begin with special efforts to develop IUCN further as 'the Union' of members and professionals. Coming decades will bring expanding demands upon conservation and also new and exciting opportunities for the Union to serve its world community. This will require that the alliance have access to the best science, close ties with its constituency, good mechanisms for information-flow, strong partnerships with key collaborators, and adequate means to study and promote solutions to problems and to take action where required. It will also require a steady stream of funds to ensure that the Union can work on a scale which is commensurate with these challenges.

As a Union, IUCN will work to strengthen its ties with its members in practical ways. The special working relationship with WWF will be strengthened to ensure mutual support in areas of common interest. Partnerships with UNEP, development aid agencies, and other existing associates, will be maintained, and new relationships will be established. The constituency of IUCN must grow, and so efforts will be made to bring into the Union additional governments, agencies, and international and national NGOs. Ties with industry, corporations, and world leaders, will be enhanced to help IUCN to achieve its objectives by succeeding in its programmes.

The agenda of IUCN will continue to concentrate upon living natural resources, but with growing attention given to the social, economic, and cultural, contexts for conservation and development. Population, economics, ecodevelopment, and conservation biology, are some of the areas of expanding interest. Well-established efforts in tropical forest, wetlands, plant, marine, and coastal, aspects of conservation, as well as national conservation strategies, will be continued. Moreover recent initiatives to promote East-West ties through conservation strategies in Europe will be expanded, as will be the exploration of peace and Nature conservation, and new practical concepts for national security.

The *World Conservation Strategy* will be revised as a result of the 1986 Conference in Ottawa,* which examined progress on implementation of the Strategy and stressed those areas which will require special attention in the decade to come. This revision will be based upon a partnership expanded to include the original group *plus* WRI, WHO, UNFPA, industry, and others which form part of the widening context for conservation and development.

Major conservation for development activities will be launched in collaboration with members and partner organizations in the Sahel, the Andes, and the Himalaya. These and other new and creative initiatives of IUCN's President M.S. Swaminathan will be pursued at expanded levels—based in considerable degree on the growing support that is coming from development aid agencies in Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and we hope soon elsewhere.

The next General Assembly of IUCN is to be held in February 1988 in San José, Costa Rica, when members of the Union will debate a long-term plan for the development and orientation of the organization, so setting the stage for its work in the coming decades. Several other major world events are being planned for the coming years, including a conference on species and the conservation of biodiversity, and the 1992 Fourth World National Parks Congress.

The *World Conservation Trust*—IUCN's endowment—will be developed to build the capital necessary to ensure for the Union a steady stream of income to cover its operating costs, including the servicing of its commissions and networks, and of its Secretariat and centres. These funds will be raised from corporations, individuals, governmental grants, and foundations. IUCN's fund-raising will be further expanded to develop sponsorship for technical and scientific work. For IUCN is committed to live up to the expectations held by so many for sensitive and professional coordination, unbiased advice, technical support, and assertive action, towards achieving its most noble mission of the global protection and sustainable use of the Earth's living natural resources.

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* See the account heading the Conferences & Meetings section of this issue, on page 369, by Dr M. Taghi Farvar, IUCN's Senior Adviser on Sustainable Development.—Ed.